

ERT-8239/A

NOV 29 1956

The President  
The White House

Dear Mr. President:

In your letter of 23 November 1956 you asked about reports on persecution of citizens in Czechoslovakia for their religious belief.

It is true that the Czech Communist Party, like the Soviet and other Communist Parties, deliberately and openly seeks to eliminate all religious belief among its members and gradually to wipe out the religious convictions of the entire population.

Prior to 1953, the Czech regime waged an overt and brutal campaign against the churches. Its aim was the total liquidation of all political activity by the clergy and the elimination of all the church's political influence on the populace. Because this goal was largely achieved by 1953, it has not been necessary since that date to arrest or persecute any large number of clerics or worshipers. Since that time, church officials have been allowed to conduct religious services with a minimum of interference. We actually have very few recent reports of religious persecution of individuals. Recent reports indicate that church attendance remains high.

This comparative moderation does not alter the fact that churchgoers and clergy are completely under the control of the Communist regime, which is basically hostile. Czechoslovakia has not enjoyed the relative relaxation of Communist controls which recently occurred in Poland, and there has been no dramatic release from prison of any church leader. As a matter of fact, the Archbishop of Prague remains under house arrest.

We are currently querying our most reliable sources to be sure that our information on religious persecution in the Satellites is accurate and up to date and will furnish you with the substance of their reports.

OCI:RSC/ms  
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Respectfully,

SIGNED

Allen S. Dulles  
Director